

farmers Branch station area conceptual MASTER plan

Overview

The long-awaited Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) light rail station serving Farmers Branch is scheduled to be in operation by 2010. For over two decades, the return of rail service has been recognized by the City and its residents as an opportunity for a new infusion of quality development in the oldest area of the City.

Residents have identified a need for retail, restaurant and professional service activities in the station area. The area will accommodate these uses as well as mid-rise to high-rise office development along the freeway and smaller scale office and residential uses throughout the area. Mixing office, residential and retail land uses stimulates and supports new retail and restaurant activity.

The purpose of the Station Area Conceptual Master Plan is to present a vision of sustainable development that meets the goals of the community. The master plan will enable the City to create new opportunities for quality development.

The vision for the station area, a consensus that emerged from the public workshops and other public meetings, is one of a unique, mixed-use urban-style neighborhood that blends retail uses, restaurants, personal and professional services, offices and housing in an environment that emphasizes walkable public spaces and creates a memorable experience for those living, working, shopping and visiting the neighborhood.

The vision establishes a vibrant new town center that will not only serve the entire community for decades to come but also present a dynamic image of Farmers Branch to rest of the world.



Farmers Branch Train Depot (circa 1915)



DART Station (circa 2002)



Context

The original Farmers Branch train depot now stands in the Historical Park as a reminder of the history of North Texas transportation. Nearby, the next chapters of that history are about to be written. For as much as the railroad revolutionized the Dallas area in the 19th century, it will do so again in the 21st century when passenger rail service returns to Farmers Branch.

The old train depot was originally located near the intersection of Valley View Lane and Denton Drive from 1877 to 1985 on a rail line from Dallas to Denton. Rail service disappeared completely for over 60 years until its successor, DART light rail, began operating in Dallas in 1996. Rail service is scheduled to return to Farmers Branch at the site of the original train depot in 2010.

Planning Process

Planning for the Farmers Branch station area has been underway for over two decades. Extensive public involvement has been essential throughout the planning process.

The Farmers Branch Station Area Conceptual Master Plan built upon these previous planning efforts. It is also, more directly, a product of the series of public meetings and workshops that took place in 2001 and 2002, which involved the citizens of Farmers Branch, area property owners, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the City Council.

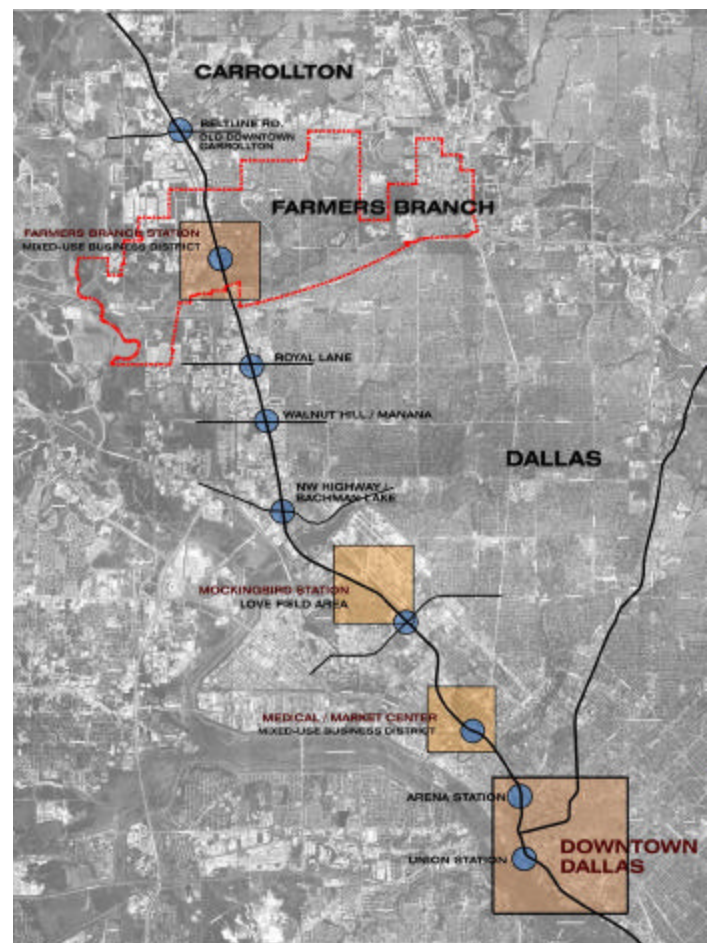
Generalized land use and street layout concepts were developed and supplemented with photographs of different building types, building materials, streetscapes, residential and commercial uses, public spaces, and transit stations. Residents at the public workshop in April 2001 identified the concepts and images they wanted to see in the station area.

The input gained from the initial public workshop resulted in refined concepts and images that were brought back to a second public workshop in March 2002 for further discussion and public comment. That workshop centered on four options for station area development.

One of the options (Option D) was dropped from further consideration based on public response supporting the concept of Valley View Lane as a "main street" lined with intense retail activity through the station area. Option D included open space along Valley View Lane that conflicted with the main street concept. The remaining options accommodate open space in more appropriate areas not adjacent to Valley View Lane.

Planning Chronology

- 1981 Old Farmers Branch Committee Report leads to Comprehensive rezoning of the station area.
- 1983 DART approves plan with rail service to Farmers Branch. DART purchases rail line to Farmers Branch.
- 1984 Forward Farmers Branch community goal setting effort calls for transit and related development in station area
- 1986 City Hall Master Plan identified two potential rail transit station locations
- 1991 Citizen task force publishes report on revitalization of the station area
- 1995 DART purchases land for transit center
- 1996 Farmers Branch designates a Public Transportation Center
- 1999 Farmers Branch forms Tax Increment Financing District to assist in funding street and utility improvements to support station area development.
- 2000 DART initiates preliminary engineering of the light rail line to Farmers Branch.
- 2001- 2002 Public meetings gather public input on a vision for station area development.



The Vision

A dynamic mix of retail stores and shops, restaurants, personal and professional services, offices and dense residential uses – a town center. The vision creates an urban-style neighborhood where daily activities are conveniently integrated rather than separated, a memorable place that encourages people to walk, bicycle and use transit, instead driving of an automobile to conduct their daily business.

Buildings and site design will create safe, pleasant, and enjoyable walking environments.

An interconnected network of streets minimizes walking and cycling distances and distributes traffic to minimize volumes on local streets. The streets are pedestrian-friendly – sidewalks, street trees, building entries, and parallel parking shelter and enhance the walking environment.

The historical significance of Valley View Lane as the prominent main street in Farmers Branch is being revived once again by taming the street with on-street parking, wide sidewalks, and retail establishments lining the street.

The proposed transit plaza creates a prominent civic component, a gathering spot and a vibrant focus of public life, which also incorporates kiss-and-ride and bus stops.

The vision creates more retail and restaurant activity, adding housing and strengthening the community's economic base.

Three illustrative options included in the plan reflect how the area will develop based on the following guiding principles.

Guiding Principles

Mixed-use Development

- A variety and intensity of land uses, including retail, restaurant, professional services, office and residential within walking distance of the station facility.

Strong Connections

- Improves transit accessibility and promotes its use
- Emphasizes walking over automobile use
- Links uses and activities
- Incorporates improvements in street design, pedestrian amenities, and multi-modal connections
- Provides visual connections to the transit station
- Provides links to City Hall, Gussie Field Watterworth Park and the Historical Park
- Anticipates pathway links to the West Side and Trinity River as well as other Farmers Branch neighborhoods

Main Street Style Development

- Encourages street activity and walking
- Maximizes visibility for retail
- Makes pedestrian areas more interesting

Pedestrian/Bicycle Environment

- Includes sidewalk, trails, trees, benches, and active public open space
- Makes biking easy, efficient, and safe

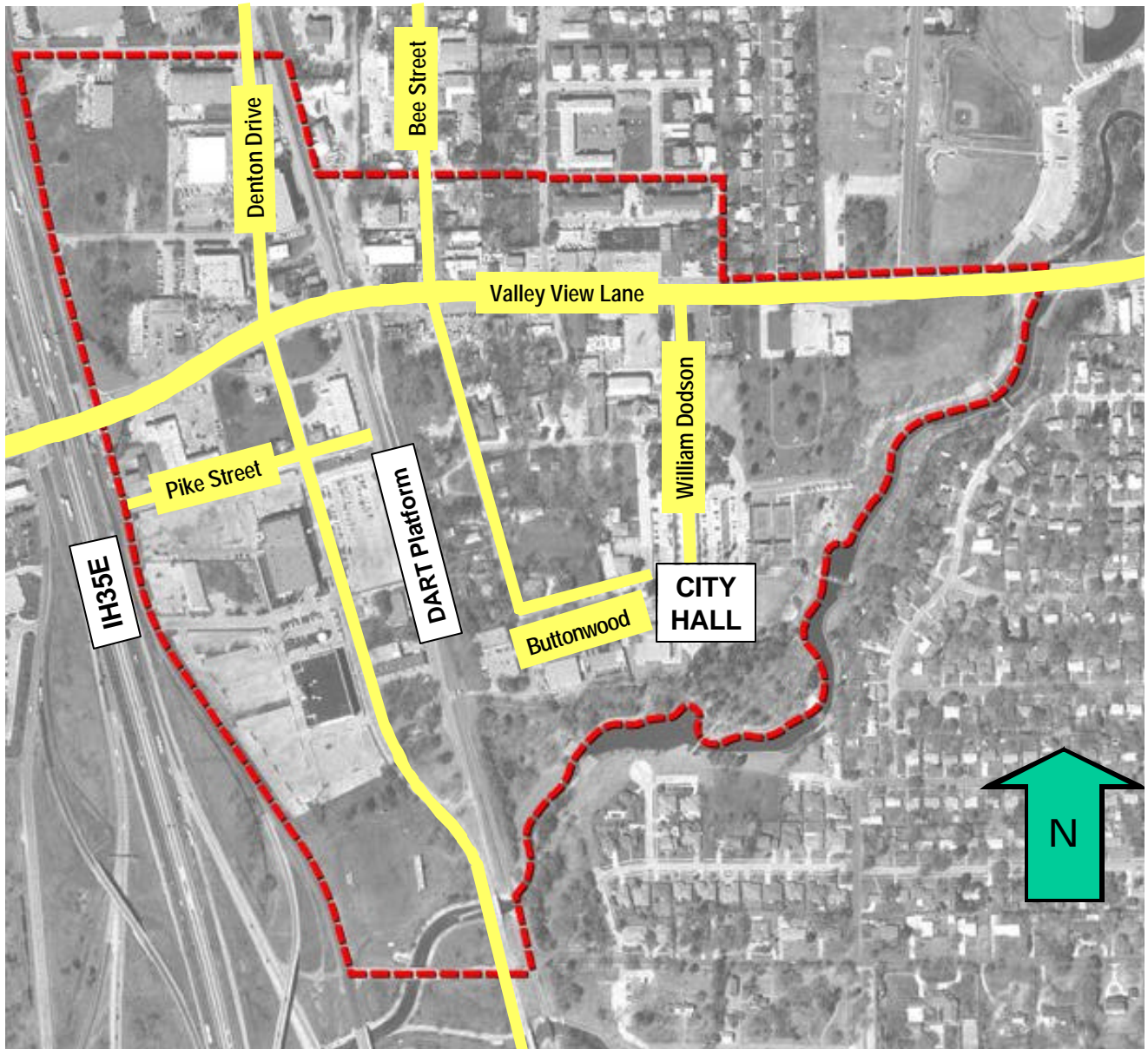
On-street Parking

- Reduces the need for large parking lots
- Provides convenient parking to support retail and restaurants

Structured Parking

- Decreases the amount of land required for parking
- Makes parking convenient and closer to the building





Study Area

The vision for the station area is intended to allow for creative and imaginative implementation. The three options all reflect slightly different realizations of the guiding principles for the station area. However, there are also important features in all three plans that are essential to the vision's integrity such as the inclusion of a public plaza, the location of the light rail station platform, the extension of certain streets to enhance the incomplete grid that exists today and the preservation of the grove of post oak trees.

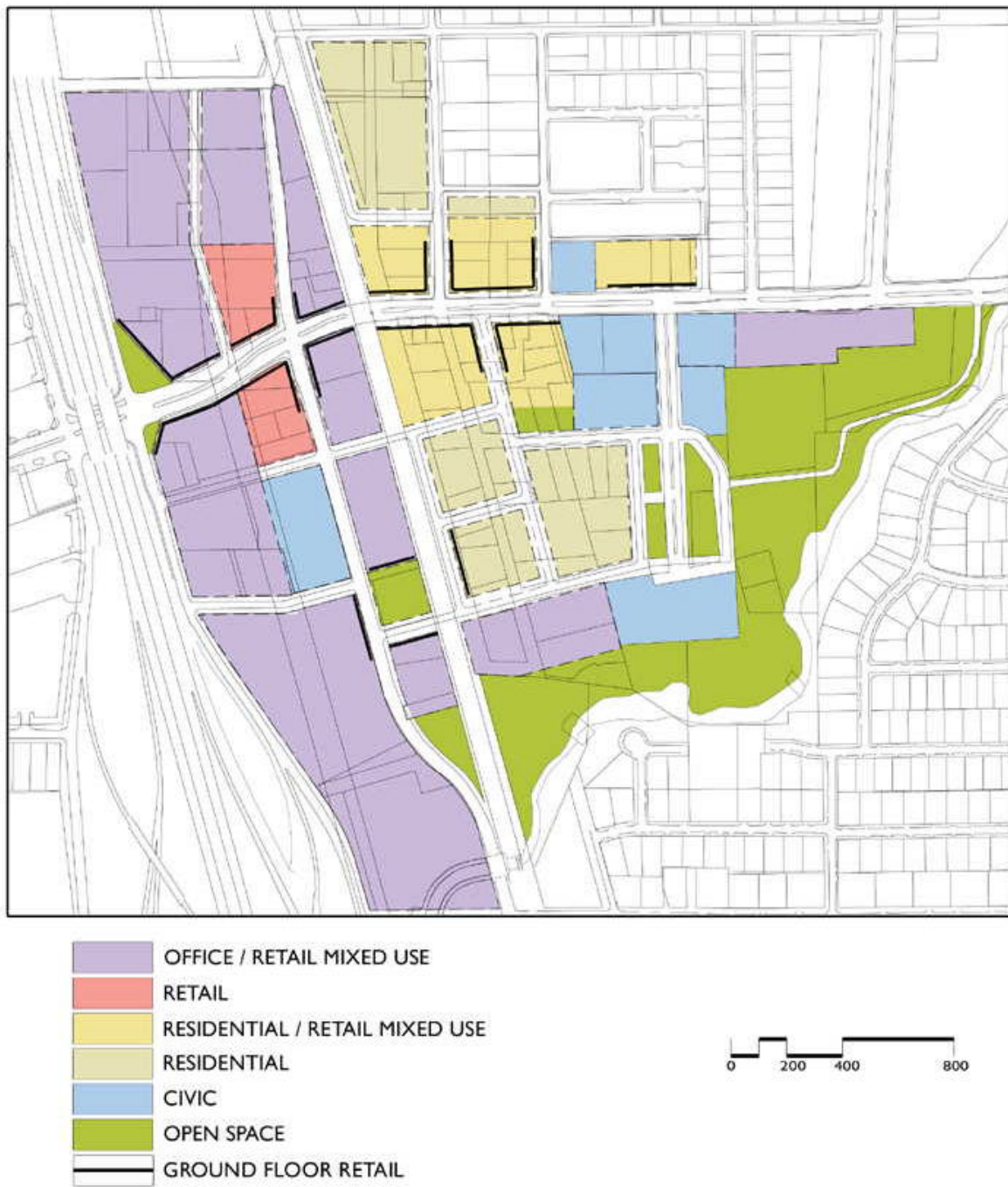
The descriptions of the three options refer to several streets and other features in the station area not labeled on the accompanying illustrations. The map shown above provides basic orientation to the station area that may be helpful to the reader in understanding the option descriptions.



Option A - Illustrative plan

Features Common to Options A, B, & C

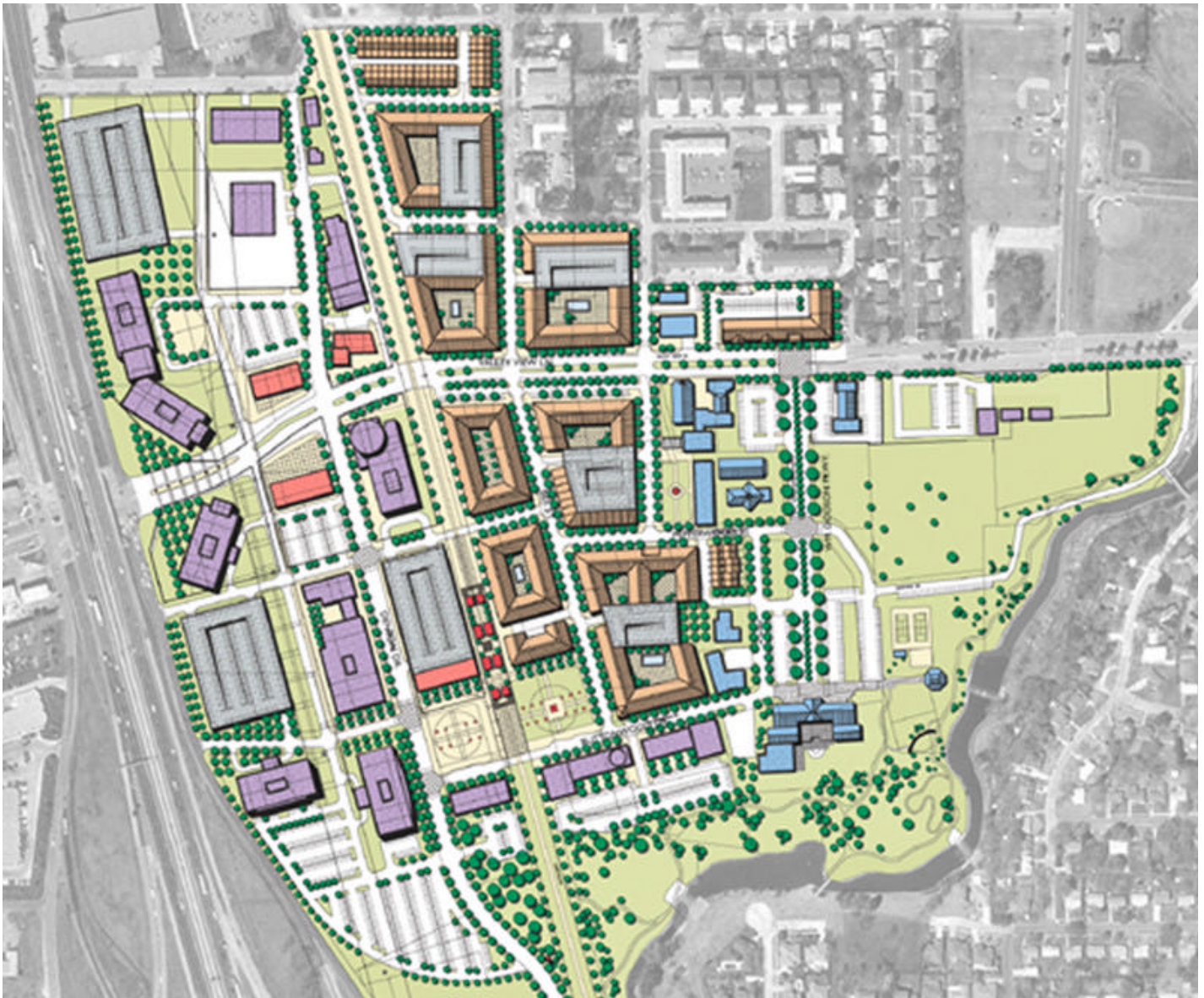
- Mix of retail, restaurant, office and residential land uses, consistent with overall vision
- Extension of street grid throughout the station area
- Platform location adjacent to existing park-and-ride
- Open space civic plaza adjacent to platform
- “Gateway” office use at I-35 and Valley View Lane
- Mini parks
- Open spaces linked by pedestrian walkways and street grid
- Grove of post oaks south of plaza preserved



Option A - Land use plan

Key Features of Option A

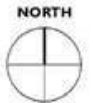
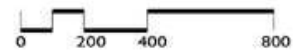
- Relocation of Bee Street approximately 150' east
- Extension of Pike Street east of rail line
- Extension of Buttonwood Drive to Denton Drive
- William Dodson Parkway linked to Buttonwood Drive via City Hall Plaza



Option B-Illustrative Plan

Features Common to Options A, B, & C

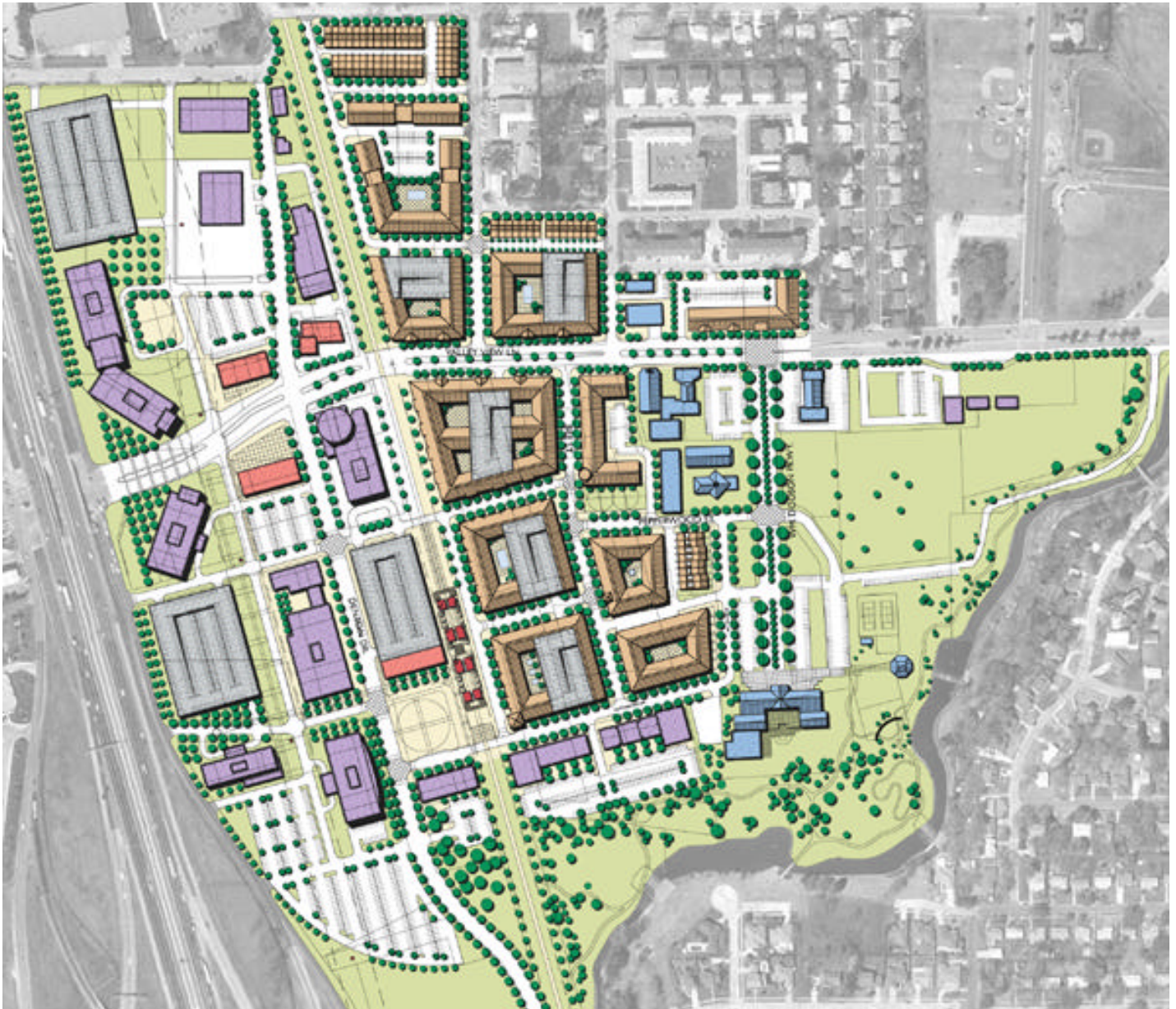
- Mix of retail, restaurant, office and residential land uses, consistent with overall vision
- Extension of street grid throughout the station area
- Platform location adjacent to existing park-and-ride
- Open space civic plaza adjacent to platform
- “Gateway” office use at I-35 and Valley View Lane
- Mini parks
- Open spaces linked by pedestrian walkways and street grid
- Grove of post oaks south of plaza preserved



Option B - Land use plan

Key Features of Option B

- Bee Street remains at existing location
- Reduced residential density between rail line and Bee Street
- Local access (mews street) on east side of rail line deleted
- Open space civic plaza is mirrored on east and west sides of rail line
- Introduction of additional residential types including town homes north of City Hall
- William Dodson Parkway linked to Buttonwood Drive via City Hall Plaza



Option C - Illustrative plan

Features Common to Options A, B, & C

- Mix of retail, restaurant, office and residential land uses, consistent with overall vision
- Extension of street grid throughout the station area
- Platform location adjacent to existing park-and-ride
- Open space civic plaza adjacent to platform
- “Gateway” office use at I-35 and Valley View Lane
- Mini parks
- Open spaces linked by pedestrian walkways and street grid
- Grove of post oaks south of plaza preserved



Option C - Land use plan

Key Features of Option C

- Relocation of Bee Street approximately 150' east
- Bee Street realigned north of Pepperwood Street
- Extension of Pike Street east of rail line
- Extension of Buttonwood Drive to Denton Drive
- No vehicular link between William Dodson Parkway and Buttonwood Drive via City Hall Plaza

HOW IT HAPPENS

Now that the vision for the Farmers Branch Station Area is in focus, how does it become a reality?

Action Plan

To help manage implementation of the vision, an action plan based on market conditions and financial feasibility will be developed that identifies specific projects, recognizes special development opportunities and establishes priorities.

Partnerships

Successful projects of this nature most always require that the community play an active role (offering economic incentives, assembling land, providing infrastructure). Therefore, the City of Farmers Branch must be willing to enter into partnerships with property owners and private developers to ensure the successful implementation of the station area plan.

Development Guidelines

Quality development guidelines will be adopted to steer public and private development in the years to come.

Zoning Changes

Zoning changes will be necessary to blend commercial and residential uses in a dense, urban-style neighborhood.

Marketing

The vision will be marketed to prospective builders, developers and investors that have a particular interest in the type of development consistent with the community's desires.

Station Design

Cooperation between Farmers Branch and DART is essential to ensure a station design that embraces the vision and is sensitive to the desires of the citizens of Farmers Branch.



Appendix

The citizens of Farmers Branch took an active role and provided input throughout the station area planning process. Development image boards, displaying both sketches and photographs, were used at several meetings to help the vision come together. In addition to the images shown throughout this document, several other examples are shown in this appendix.

The existing character of the area is captured in a series of photos showing the types of uses common today. Photographs of successful mixed-use developments were favorably received by the public as examples of the type of development residents and property owners would like to see in the station area. The images of retail storefronts are included as a result of citizen input requesting a greater emphasis on quality retail in the development.



Existing Conditions

The area formerly known as Old Farmers Branch is a prime location for redevelopment and currently supports a variety of low-density land uses, including single and multi-family residential, retail and commercial developments.

The Union Pacific rail line, owned by DART, runs north and south through the heart of the area. The future platform location adjacent to the current Park-N-Ride will become the focus of the future station area development.

These images typify the character of the area today.



Development Images and Citizen Input

During public workshops, residents and property owners spoke positively about plans for redevelopment and gave input regarding what they envisioned for the future of the station area. These images show typical development types favored by citizens.



Quality Retail

Quality retail is an important element of Transit-Oriented Development.

In partnering with property owners and developers, one of the goals of this masterplan is to encourage high-quality retail uses in key areas, especially on the ground floor of active areas and along the Valley View Lane corridor.

